



Helping Children Understand and Express Emotions

PREVENTING THE BEHAVIOR

Children experience big feelings every day, but they don't always have the words to explain how they feel. When children learn to recognize, name, and talk about emotions, they are better able to manage their behavior and connect with others.

- **Teach feeling words** - Help your child learn words like happy, sad, mad, excited, scared, frustrated, and calm.
- **Name your child's feelings** - Say what you see: "You look excited! Your eyes are big and your mouth is smiling."
- **Talk about others' feelings** - Point out emotions during everyday moments: "That child looks mad. His hands are tight. I wonder why."
- **Model your own feelings** - Share how you feel and what you do to cope: "I feel frustrated. I'm going to take a break and think of a solution."
- **Use books to explore feelings** - Read stories about emotions and talk about how the characters feel.
- **Normalize all feelings** - Let your child know all feelings are okay, even when behaviors need guidance.

HOW TO RESPOND

- **Acknowledge the feeling first** "You look sad and disappointed. I feel that way sometimes too."
- **Go beyond saying "calm down"** - Help your child name the feeling and talk about what might help.
- **Problem-solve together** - "What could help you feel better right now?"
- **Offer comfort and support** - Stay nearby and calm while your child works through the emotion.
- **Use everyday moments to teach** - Tantrums, frustration, and disappointment are chances to build emotional skills.

TEACHING NEW SKILLS

- **Teach children to label their own emotions** - Encourage them to say how they feel using words or pictures.
- **Teach how emotions feel in the body** - Talk about physical clues (tight fists, tears, fast breathing).
- **Teach empathy** - Help your child notice and care about how others feel.
- **Teach coping strategies** - Practice calming tools like deep breathing, taking a break, asking for help, or using words.
- **Practice often** - Emotional learning happens through repetition during everyday routines and play.

REMEMBER

Teaching children to understand and express emotions is a powerful way to prevent challenging behavior and build lifelong social-emotional skills. When children have the words for their feelings, they are better able to handle them.

WHAT IS THE PYRAMID MODEL

The Pyramid Model is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development for our children.

